
Miscellaneous

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Experimental comparative study between storytelling and storydoing in Facebook advertising

Abstract

In 2015, the United Nations established a global framework to address the challenges concerning the economic, social and environmental development of the planet. In this context, brands align themselves with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to contribute to their well-being and to that of society, and to enhance their reputation through honest and transparent communication (Lazo & Patiño, 2016; Bandyopadhyay & Ray, 2020). In this framework, this research aims to measure the effectiveness of storydoing understood as a strategic communication model refined from storytelling. To this end, a sample of 425 parents of different nationalities was exposed to a survey in which they were asked about the different dimensions that make up the engagement construct and about the consumption intention generated by each of the stimuli hosted on Facebook. These are two creativities that belong to the storydoing advertising campaign of Power Xoc, a soluble cocoa brand created ad hoc that provides society with a series of tools to fight against bullying. The results show that the storydoing piece generates more engagement than storytelling, a phenomenon that explains why Facebook users have the intention to buy the advertised product. Consequently, this work contributes to empirically

ground the theory of social exchange through the impact of advertising based on narrative patterns in a society that responds against social injustices.

Keywords

Storytelling; storydoing; strategic communication; advertising; experimental research; social media; Facebook; United Nations; Sustainable Development Goals; SDGs.

1. Introduction

The United Nations decade of action calls on social actors of all kinds to collaborate in accelerating progress towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Companies play a primary role in this, as they can contribute to the achievement of these goals from their communications through their corporate social responsibility programs and advertising campaigns (Chimhowu et al., 2019). In fact, for Castelló-Martínez (2024), this stems from the fact that brands tend to build their campaigns based on the concerns of their target audiences, thus connecting with their surrounding reality.

For all these reasons, citizens expect their favorite brands to do something for society, as the COVID-19 pandemic has already shown (Edelman Trust Barometer, 2020). It is in this framework that storydoing is proposed as a strategic tool for the construction of "activist" brands (García et al., 2024) and, consequently, for the development of campaigns that invite their audience to actively participate in their narratives.

Although stories are known to have always existed, in the 1990s, organizations began to use storytelling as a strategic tool to represent brand values and also to connect with their audience (Fog et al., 2005; Tapia López & Durán Gil-Casares, 2017; Selva-Ruiz, 2024). However, in the 21st century, the consumer is at the epicenter of brand stories, and therefore, has the power to decide their future. "Only those [brands] that create a concept of engagement from the deepest sense of the term will be the ones that manage to break through the avalanche of attempts by advertisers to reach users" (Vizcaíno-Alcantud et al., 2024, p. 95).

This makes us wonder what degree of commitment and purchase intention people have when interacting with a storydoing piece, and compare it with those who interact with a storytelling one.

The term *storydoing* originated within U.S. agency co:collective, whose founders, Ty Montague and Rose Mary Ryan, began to call all organizations born with a social purpose storydoing companies. For that reason, it is now registered as StoryDoing®. However, given the similarity with the term storytelling, it soon began to be disseminated in the same way, thus circumventing the rights of authorship of the term.

It can be applied as a strategic communication tool and aims to build brands with a purpose that covers some aspects for improvement of society such as sustainability, diversity, responsible consumption, environment, among others (Jayaratne et al., 2019; Sebastian Morrillas, et al., 2023). A clear example is U.S. brand Toms, which has been donating the same number of alpargatas it sells to disadvantaged people since 2006. Winner of the Best for the Word B Corps award, this brand opted for *one for one*, a business model that has resulted in donating a third of its profits to non-governmental organizations that care for and protect underprivileged children since 2019.

This is what Aaker (2014) calls *corporate social purpose*, which storydoing contemplates as an axis from which various stories that run through the internal points of the organization and end up deriving in advertising campaigns are constructed. Montague (2013) mentions the same concept under the term *meta-story*, referring to a story made up of the truth and transparency observed in the actions carried out by the organization itself. This translates into a primordial narrative that is gestated internally and extends to its products, its advertising and its values, pursuing the improvement of society, and therefore, going beyond commercial ambition (De Miguel-Zamora & Toledano-Cuervas, 2018).

However, some scholars challenge cause marketing tactics, many of which are related to seasonal campaigns that only seek to promote brand image (Das et al., 2018; Li et al., 2020; Coleman, 2022). Some examples are those that dress their social media and product packaging with rainbow colors in the months when LGTBQ+ pride is celebrated, such as KFC, Doritos, or

Burger King. Although some storydoing campaigns are similar to those mentioned above, our subject of study has certain singularities that make it differ from that.

Montague (2013) insists that storydoing stories are easily identifiable through a series of questions that are posed both in his manifesto *True story* and on his website storydoing.com:

- Does the business define a clear purpose in the world?
- Does the team know the purpose and how to act accordingly in their job?
- Does the business frame the purpose and drive innovation and decision-making?
- Does the purpose define a clear enemy in society against which to focus the organization's efforts?
- Have transformational actions been defined to translate purpose into customer experience?
- Are outsiders engaged and involved in the purpose?

Not only does this drive business and brand value in the form of positive public relations and word of mouth, but the organization is involved in a mission that goes beyond the commercial scope and organically establishes emotional ties with a society that is sensitive to the future of the planet (Lazo & Patiño, 2016). This aspect is currently gaining particular traction, as people perceive that the world is in an environmental, political, and economic crisis, so they are looking for brands that help manage that. This stands as a relevant scenario to create stories and experiences that convey optimism, understand their immediate needs, and demonstrate that their corporate actions really improve people's lives (Havas Group, 2023).

Given this situation, storydoing is presented as a disruptive communication model that is used to build purposeful brands and to carry out the communication of their brand assets. Therefore, it is convenient to make mention of the three pillars that support such an advertising model: purpose, brand assets and brand amplification (Baraybar & Luque, 2018).

Purpose is the ambition that drives an organization to contribute in the world. An aspect that leads the brand to demonstrate its commitment to society through its assets, that is, its actions, products, services and unique experiences. To do this, the story is the support that storydoing has to amplify the brand message. In fact, it is at this point of the strategic gear where we realize that it is a perfected model of storytelling, since the story is part of the storydoing formula (Llorente & Cuenca, 2017; Baraybar & Luque, 2018).

For example, the liquor brand Ruavieja has been aiming since 2018 for people to see each other more often and, to this end, that same year it provided its target audience with a website for them to calculate the time they had left to spend with their loved ones. The “El tiempo que nos queda” campaign, apart from presenting itself in society with a story that connects emotionally with its audience, raised awareness and made many people abandon video calls to meet in person.

Another campaign that illustrates this is that of the ColaCao brand, whose story focuses on the values of self-improvement, integration, and companionship in sports, giving prominence to boys and girls. Since then, it has been supporting the Spanish national Olympic and Paralympic teams, and encouraging sports scholarships so that children can fulfill their dreams. So much so that its latest campaign, *No al acoso escolar*, focuses once again on the interests of children, ensuring that they have a future free of violence. In fact, on their website, they point out that the ColaCao Foundation is committed to raising awareness and social dissemination in the field of bullying, making it visible and promoting a social debate that helps give volume and importance to this scourge.

To achieve this, the brand has launched an educational platform for child empowerment and bullying prevention. In addition, it has designed the *Soy único* school program, in which families and teachers can participate so that schools can implement it and contribute to fostering self-esteem, empathy, and respect for others. In fact, the soluble chocolate brand intends to spread the message, and for this purpose, it provides its audience with the

#ReptimeConnmigoSoyUnico #ReptieConnmigoSoyunica #ReptieConnmigoNoAlBullying hashtags, with a strong presence on Facebook, whose page has 267,000 followers.

We are, therefore, in the presence of a communication model whose value proposition is reflected in its way of acting, not of communicating, through new branded content formulas that seek to build a better future for society.

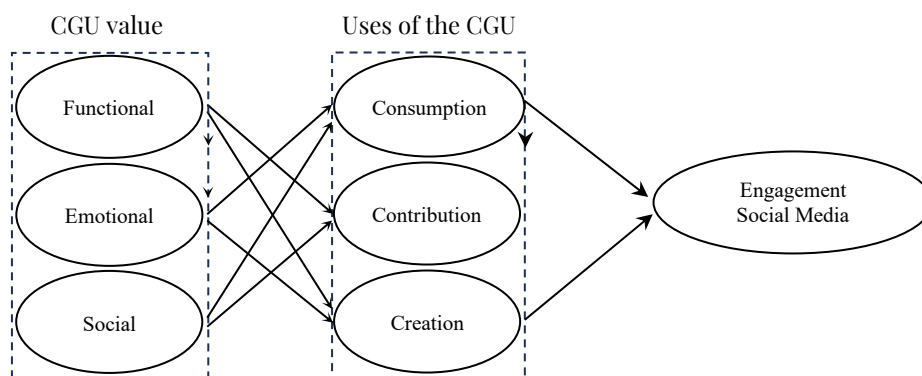
This is explained by the social exchange theory, the maxim of which underlies the social interaction and social structure that exists among the exchanges that occur daily between various agents in society (Homans, 1961; Blau, 1964; Emerson, 1962). According to Bennet (2003), people's personal values and their predisposition to become involved in a social cause from corporate campaigns affect the nature of their commitment.

When applied to the subject of study of this research, this means that the decision to interact with a brand depends on a cost-benefit relationship (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959; Blau, 1970). In this sense, the aforementioned shared values are an antecedent for the commitment to the brand to be generated (Moorman, et al., 1992).

A study conducted by Hochman and Maynor (2012) highlighted those individuals exposed to Secret's *Mean Stinks* campaign generated high levels of engagement with the brand. The researchers concluded that this is because the study participants recognized the anti-bullying values that the brand expressed through the campaign. This phenomenon becomes especially important in the digital environment, since the more positive interactions people generate with the campaign, the more interactions they will seek, and therefore, the more committed they will be to the cause (Constant et al., 1994; Hayes & King 2014).

Hollebeek et al. (2019) refer to such engagement as the willingness to invest cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and social resources in interactions with the brand, resulting from a motivation, especially those manifested today through electronic activity (Van Doorn et al. 2010). Along the same lines, Davcik et al. (2022) point out that the engagement that social media users acquire with digital content can be affected by perceived value, which has an impact on the relationship with the brand. As shown in Figure 1, some scholars have pointed to perceived functional value (Jahn, B. & Kunz, 2012), perceived emotional value (De Vries, N. J. & Carlson, 2014), and perceived social value (Kim, et al., 2012) as indicators that result in a behavioral conduct that Internet users manifest by interacting through the functionalities provided by the social network itself.

Figure 1. Theoretical model of engagement



Source: Davcik et al., 2022

2. Methodology

The objective of this research is to analyze storydoing as a strategic tool in the field of advertising. Specifically, the aim is to check whether campaigns built under the precepts of

storydoing generate more engagement and purchase intent than storytelling campaigns on Facebook.

To this end, we have based the research on a theoretical framework that has led to the development of the following hypotheses:

H1: Storydoing campaigns generate more engagement than storytelling campaigns.

H2: The engagement generated by storydoing campaigns leads users of social networks to have the intention to buy the product.

To corroborate both, the experimental methodology was used, for which two stimuli were developed, one storydoing and the other storytelling, whose engagement and purchase intention were measured using a Likert scale (1-7) based on the theoretical model of Davcik et al. (2022) (Calder et al., 2009).

First the experimental stimuli respond to two Facebook pieces belonging to a Power Xoc campaign. This is a fictitious soluble cocoa storydoing brand specifically created for this research to avoid any previous reputation by the participants towards already known brands (see <https://figshare.com/s/9445f8a3ed1bb8a549>).

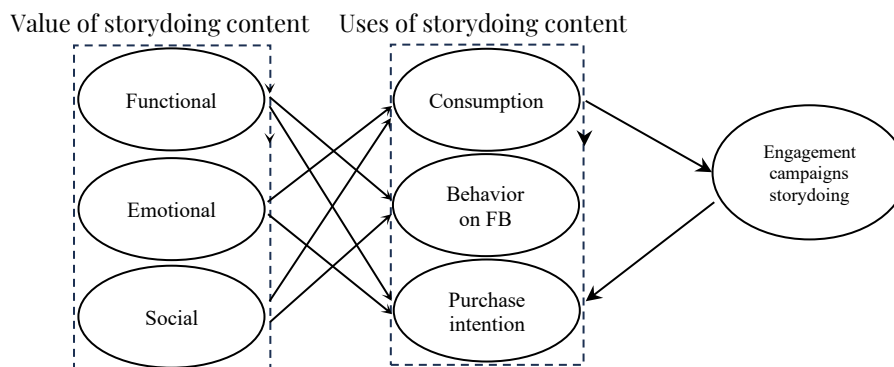
In its latest campaign against school bullying, Cola Cao's proposal inspired us to replicate some of its strategic actions, as well as those visual elements that make up some of its advertising pieces. Most of them feature children performing an activity socially attributed to the opposite sex, such as boys practicing ballet or girls playing soccer. That is why, in order to conduct the creativities of both experimental stimuli, we opted for a girl playing a sport socially attributed to boys alone, accompanied by the *I am what I am* claim.

In addition to referring to Gloria Gaynor's song of the same name with which social diversity is currently celebrated, the campaign slogan is based on an insight that Forsberg and Horton (2020) point out in their research. After interviewing a group of schoolchildren aged 12-15, the authors concluded that they suffer bullying at school because they are aware that they are different from the rest—they are the way they are.

On the other hand, the choice of Facebook as a support for both advertising pieces responds to the fact that Facebook's growth is estimated to reach a community of 254,300,000 in the United States in the coming years (Fernandez, 2024). On the other hand, 68% of those who use it are between 30 and 49 years of age, with 27 to 30 being the predominant age of new mothers worldwide (Gottfried, 2024; Schneider, 2022). This is relevant information, since our study is aimed at parents from different geographical areas who are Facebook users.

To measure engagement and purchase intention, we used a 24-item questionnaire that determines the behavior of social media users according to how they perceive the content to which they are exposed (Rodríguez-Ríos, 2024). As shown in Figure 2, this tool is based on the model proposed by Davcik et al. (2022) which is illustrated in Figure 1 above.

Figure 2. Proposed model for measuring engagement and purchase intention on Facebook.



Source: own elaboration.

Functional value was measured with the following items: a) it is practical; b) it is useful; and c) it is necessary (Jahn & Kunz, 2012, Davcik et al., 2022 and Grewal et al., 2004). Similarly, emotional value was evaluated through items a) it is enjoyable; b) it is entertaining; c) it is exciting; and d) it is fun (De Vries & Carlson, 2014 and Davcik et al., 2022). Finally, social value was assessed through items a) it helps me feel in harmony with people; b) it affects me socially; c) it reflects the kind of person I see myself to be; and d) it makes me feel good about myself (Kim et al., 2012, Grewal et al., 2004; Davcik et al., 2022).

The consumption construct was measured with the following items: a) makes me want to read brand-related posts; b) makes me want to read brand fan pages; c) makes me want to watch brand-related videos; d) makes me want to follow brand-related blogs; and e) makes me want to follow the brand on social media (Schivinski et al., 2016). To measure behavioral dimension on Facebook, we were inspired by Valentini's (2018) proposal: the Facebook image makes me want to a) respond that I like it; b) post a comment; c) share it with my friends and other people in my network using @mention; d) post a video with the selected brand's product; and e) use a hashtag related to the selected brand.

Our study sample consisted of new mothers and fathers, between 27 and 49 years old, from different parts of the world. However, in order to obtain a significant sample, previous research on some engagement dimensions, which was the basis for this work, was taken as a reference (Mutz, 2011). De Vries & Carlson (2014) acquired a sample made up of 452 participants, Jahn & Kunz (2012) of 526, and Kim et al. (2012) of 259. In our case, we obtained a 425-participant sample hosted on Amazon Mechanical Turk—an open collaborative platform that has gained the respect of the scientific community, as it is characterized by the high quality of data collected in empirical studies (Xu & Wu, 2016; Minton & Cornwell, 2016; Kees et al., 2017).

3. Results

To determine whether the main variables of this research were independent with respect to certain variables that were used as factors, we compared the means of the distributions of the quantitative variable (engagement and purchase intention) in the different groups (-telling and -doing) established by the qualitative variable story-. To do this, Welch's t-test was used, since the assumptions of homoscedasticity in Levene's test were not met ($p < 0.01$).

All statistical tests were applied with a 95% confidence interval. The Jamovi statistical software, version 2.3.18, was employed to conduct each of the tests.

The sample was mostly made up of participants from the United States ($n=391$), but there were also participants from India ($n=20$), and to a lesser extent, from Brazil ($n=7$), Canada ($n=2$), United Kingdom ($n=2$), Italy ($n=1$), Nigeria ($n=1$), and Mexico ($n=1$). Sex-based participant distribution in each group was fairly balanced, with 224 females, 200 males, and 1 gender-neutral individual who, given such low representation, we decided to disregard for the analysis of the results ($N=424$).

Regarding participation, more subjects participated in the control group ($n=220$) than in the experimental group ($n=204$). In this regard, most of the female individuals had a child aged 0-6 years old (39%), whereas most male participants had children aged 6-12 years old (38%). However, after applying the χ^2 test², no statistically significant relationship was found between sex and the ad tested ($N=424$, $\chi^2(2) = 0.00194$, $p=0.965$).

On the other hand, as shown in Table 1, a test for independent samples was performed and significant differences were found between the mean engagement of individuals who had seen the Facebook storytelling piece and those who had been exposed to the storydoing piece ($N=204$, storydoing= 5.70, SD= 0.50; $N=220$, storytelling= 5.13, SD= 1.11; $p<.001$, with a mean effect size (Cohen's D)= 0.653).

Table 1. T-test for engagement

T-test for independent samples

		statistic	df	p		effect size
Engagement	Welch's t-test	6.80	310	< .001	Cohen's d	0.653

Note. $H_a \mu_{doing} \neq \mu_{telling}$.
Source: own elaboration.

In the same line, after doing another test for independent samples, Table 2 also reveals significant differences in terms of purchase intention means between individuals who saw the Facebook storytelling piece and those who participated with the storydoing one ($N=204$, storydoing= 5.78, $SD=0.69$; $N=220$, storytelling= 5.05, $SD=1.41$; $p<.001$, with a mean effect size (Cohen's D) = 0.654).

Table 2. t-test for purchase intent

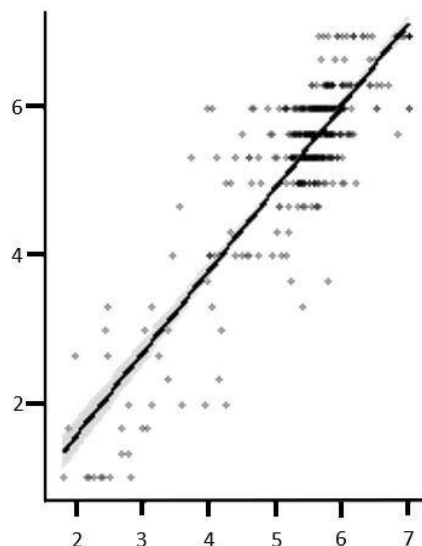
T-test for independent samples

		statistic	df	p		effect size
Purchase Intention	Welch's t-test	6.81	325	< .001	Cohen's d	0.654

Note. $H_a \mu_{doing} \neq \mu_{telling}$.
Source: own elaboration.

Next, to check whether there was a statistically significant relationship between *engagement* (Likert: 1-7) and purchase intention (Likert: 1-7), a correlation test was carried out. Figure 3 shows that a significant relationship was found between both variables ($N=425$, Spearman $Rho=0.673$, $p<.001$).

Figure 3. Correlation test



Source: own elaboration.

The effect size of this relationship was calculated by means of a simple linear regression with which a significant effect was obtained ($R^2=0.747$, $p<.001$). Therefore, we can affirm that 74%

of the variance in purchase intention is explained by the engagement generated in the individuals.

4. Discussion

De Miguel and Toledano (2018) point out that narrative, understood as a tool for creation and research in advertising, leads an organization to define and identify itself through corporate values. In this sense, in recent decades, several brands are taking strong positions in favor of social and environmental activism, recognizing the importance of connecting with conscious consumers who value the social work done by organizations.

However, not all of them implement tools within people's reach to fight against some social or environmental cause (Edelman Trust Barometer, 2020). To this end, branded content is presented as an optimal opportunity to integrate the values of the organization and disseminate a brand message that is increasingly close, transparent, empathetic and conversational (Castelló-Martínez et al., 2023).

This research aims to explore storydoing in advertising and determine whether storydoing campaigns generate more engagement and purchase intention in Facebook users than storytelling campaigns.

To this end, an experiment in which 424 individuals (N=424) participated in a questionnaire related to two Power Xoc advertising pieces was carried out. This is a fictitious soluble chocolate brand that is based on the most important principle pointed out by Montague (2013) in his storydoing manifesto: organizational purpose. In this case, we chose to work with the 2030 Agenda, whose goals are planted to achieve a better and more sustainable future (Naciones Unidas, 2015).

This experiment was reliable, since both pieces were based on the success stories of Secret and ColaCao, which after thorough exploration, we consider to contain all the storydoing elements pointed out by Montague (2013) in his *True Story* manifesto. Specifically, a story composed of an approach consistent with the communication axis from which the creative strategy starts (De-Miguel Zamora et al., 2022).

However, to determine if a campaign is truly storydoing, longitudinal studies would be required, with a procedure that would take decades of study (Gaitán & Piñuel, 1995; 1998). Since we do not have so much time, we reviewed Secret's and ColaCao's own media, and we can point out that Procter & Gamble—owner of the Secret brand—has been working for the inclusion and equality of young people around the world since 2011. Similarly, ColaCao has been committed to the education and well-being of children since 2009.

Our experiment, in addition to being inspired by these real cases, takes SDG-16, which aims to prevent, detect and act against bullying so that all children grow up with equal rights and an education free of violence. An aspect that could place the fictional campaign on a real plane, distancing it, in turn, from pinkwashing campaigns. According to Sailer et al. (2022) this is a strategy used by companies and institutions that promote messages of support for sexual and gender diversity with the only objective of obtaining commercial benefits or improving their public image. An approach, in short, far from a communication model that endows the brand with an identity consistent with the approach and with the formats used to disseminate its content (De-Miguel Zamora et al., 2022).

5. Conclusions

In view of the two hypotheses put forward in this work, we can say that both have been corroborated.

H1: Storydoing campaigns generate more engagement than storytelling campaigns.

The experiment results show that, after manipulating the independent variable, the storydoing piece generated more engagement and purchase intention than the storytelling

piece. This is due to the fact that, even though both of them belong to the same campaign against bullying, the former contains a tool with which to contribute to the eradication of this social scourge, and consequently, to Power Xoc's story: a website againstbullying.com in which the target audience can participate through the #StopBullying hashtag.

Therefore, it can be stated that the perception that social media users have of storydoing advertising content is closely related to the intention to respond to the campaign proposal. This aspect underlines the social exchange theory, as pointed out in the theoretical framework of this research.

This theory postulates that the relationship between organizations and society is based on an exchange between costs and benefits. The results obtained from the experiment proposed in this research demonstrate that the subjects are driven by an intrinsic reward that seems to be linked to emotions rather than to the functional benefit that the advertised product may provide. Precisely, one of the perceived values that Davick et al. (2022) claim contributes to activate the behavior of social network users is the emotional one.

Likewise, in the weaving of such relationships, the reduction of costs and the simplification of the participation of the people involved with the organization are highlighted, since they tend to avoid actions that are complex for them, especially when it involves an investment of time, effort and money. This is why the tactics used in the storydoing strategy proposed in the Power Xoc campaign are based on a quick exchange between brand and society through a hashtag with which to participate in the construction of a polyphonic discourse against bullying.

On the other hand, as Blau (1968) indicates, people feel compelled to reciprocate when they are granted with something that concerns their interest. The results support this issue by determining that those subjects who have been provided with a web page with a hashtag to participate in a social cause have generated higher engagement rates than the creativity that did not have it. This last aspect is specified in the discussion regarding the following hypothesis.

H2: The engagement generated by storydoing campaigns leads to social media users having the intention to buy the product.

Specifically, 74% of the purchase intention is determined by the individuals' commitment to the advertising piece. For this reason, we can confirm that the intention to buy the product advertised in a storydoing campaign, in addition to being higher than in the storytelling piece, is explained by the commitment that the audience generates with the ad. In this sense, we understand that engagement is a motivational driver (Florenthal, 2019) that makes people want to buy the product and pay off the debt they feel indebted for having received the campaign proposal.

This is why this paper contributes to the development of a theory on the use of stories in strategic communication in the field of advertising, highlighting the use of storydoing as an engagement factor in social media. This is all articulated through a story featuring a call to action that is accompanied by an iconic brand tool such as a website or a hashtag, and which makes it easier for consumers to adhere to a sustainable campaign story. A fundamental aspect that, unlike storytelling advertising creativities, would allow people's attention to be captured in an understandable and eye-catching way in the attention economy and promote long-term trusting relationships (Thibaut and Kelley, 1959; Núñez, 2007; Fischer-Appelt, & Dernbach, 2022).

In conclusion, we have managed to answer the main objective of this research: to analyze storydoing in advertising and determine its effectiveness compared to similar formulas. A communication model that, at this point in the study, can be defined as a business and advertising communication tool based on a story that goes beyond the commercial, that detects and defines a problem in society and that leads to the participation of the interested actors through actions proposed by the organization itself (Rodríguez-Ríos, 2024).

Nevertheless, this research has some limitations. The category and type of product proposed in this study could also be a factor that may have biased the sample's responses in

terms of their preferences in this regard. For this reason, it is proposed to replicate the research in different categories of products and services.

Finally, it could be interesting to replicate the research through stimuli whose creativities emulated a pinkwashing campaign to see if the results resemble those obtained with the present research. In this sense, focus groups could be used to determine how the subjects perceive the brand, as well as to analyze the UGC in social networks regarding the proposed stimuli. This type of research could dispel the debate held (Das et al., 2018; Li et al., 2020; Coleman, 2022) around the dubious credibility of brands that contemplate social purposes.

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